Expanded and adapted from extempore remarks:

Statement by Mr. Nirupam Sen, Permanent Representative, on Agenda Items: 47: Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the major United Conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields; 112: Strengthening of the United Nations Systems; 113: Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit, and 149: United Nations reform: measures and proposals; joint debate at the 61st session of the UN General Assembly on November 20, 2006

Madam President,

We thank the Secretary-General for the reports prepared for this joint debate on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major UN conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Madam President,

The need for an integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits to address the inter-linkages in their outcomes, even while separately pursuing their respective individual outcomes, has been long acknowledged. GA resolution 57/270B recognized the need for such coordinated and integrated follow up. The issue of conference follow-up has been on the agenda of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for several years.

The first and foremost issue in conference follow-up is the issue of implementation. Resolution 57/270B stresses the need for implementation. Subsequent GA resolutions, including the 2005 World summit Outcome, have repeatedly reinforced this emphasis. Most recently, the development follow-up resolution (A/Res/60/265) emphasized the urgent need to fully implement the global partnership for development and enhanced the momentum generated by the 2005 World Summit Outcome. Without implementation, we would be caught in the cycle of following up the outcome of a Conference by having another conference.
Implementation should be understood broadly to include interpretation, resources, building further on what is unclear or incomplete and doing this in terms of the evolving reality outside. In the ECOSOC Resolution we adopted earlier this morning we looked at problems of resources and interpretation. We need to build in terms of real developments outside which we should closely examine, besides also taking up the unfinished agenda of comprehensive reform. The two main characteristics of the global economy are multinational corporations where production truly takes place in many countries and financial transactions that have totally outstripped exchanges of goods and services and involve a search for speculative profits. The Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO have totally modified the original Keynesian mandate and have become the underpinning and global institutional framework facilitating this search for profits. Developing countries need a rule based multilateral order much more than the developed countries. But these rules, to enable them to succeed, have to be truly fair and not geared entirely, as they are at present, to achieving the economic objectives of the developed world. Therefore, a fundamental reform of international monetary, financial and trading institutions is essential to underpin new and truly fair rules.

The original third pillar of Bretton Woods, was the stillborn ITO. Its agenda put full employment first. It recognised that liberalising trade and getting prices right would not be enough to maximise global welfare. Separate action on employment was necessary. This corrective remains relevant. Even the MDGs cannot be achieved without the right framework. There are many developing countries, including in Africa, where the institutions or infrastructure for private investment simply does not exist. Therefore delivery on ODA target of 0.7% of GNI is critical. Even in more advanced developing countries that may not need ODA and that have institutions and infrastructure “we must recognise that even as private initiative is encouraged, public systems need to be reinvigorated”. This is true of physical infrastructure, irrigation, education and public health. The impasse in the Doha Round of Trade Talks has shown that while national borders should not matter for trade and capital flows, we should not raise the issue of technology and labour flows; while subsidies are bad for industrial sectors we should not talk about agricultural subsidies; while the private interests of IPR holders are sacrosanct, we should not discuss the public interest or protecting the biogenetic resources of developing countries. As for the IMF, we have seen its self admitted mistakes, its bail out packages that not only did not work but made the crisis worse, its inability to prevent countries on the eve of civil conflict plunging deeper into it.

Therefore, it is critical for ECOSOC (a beginning has been made in the Resolution just adopted) to periodically evaluate international economic policies which includes the policies of these institutions under the guidance of the
General Assembly which should address the mounting problems in the world outside.

The vitality of the UN system rests on the strong and effective role of the General Assembly as the chief deliberative, policy making and representative organ of the United Nations. India, like several other Member States, emphasized the need to reinvest the General Assembly with the powers that it should enjoy in accordance with the Charter. Efforts to revitalize the General Assembly by strengthening its role and enhancing its authority to perform its functions as laid out in the Charter call for both procedural and substantive measures. The marginalization of the General Assembly because of the encroachment by the Security Council into its jurisdiction has been a repeated concern of the wider membership of the UN. The functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Security Council are clearly defined in the Charter. There is need for respecting and maintaining the balance between the principal organs of the United Nations in accordance with their respective roles as laid down in the Charter.

The General Assembly adopted a detailed resolution very recently in the 60th session of the UNGA. Effective implementation and follow up on the recommendations contained in the resolution is a necessary part of the process of revitalizing the GA. It is also important to re-establish the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly to consider measures that would enable it to play its mandated role in issues of peace and security, development, management (including human resource management), and the progressive development of the international law and its codification.

Some recent reports commissioned at great cost have revived discredited ideas like governance. Governance is the greatest encroachment of all because it seeks to recreate the General Assembly and its Fifth Committee in the image of the Security Council – the dominance of a few.

Madam President,

Any true reform of the United Nations without a comprehensive reform of the Security Council would be like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. It would leave untouched the present correlation of power which is a fetter on solutions and a part of the problem. There is effectively one veto in the IMF and five vetoes in the Security Council with no countervailing power of other countries to ensure a measure of optimality. Without a thorough going reform even the fundamental problems of the economy cannot be effectively tackled. Political will is required to transform thought into practical energy – this is the only law of thermodynamics that is needed here. On the present balance between the Security Council and the General Assembly I once adapted a saying
of Robespierre in another forum: power without virtue is pernicious but virtue without power is helpless. However, this is not a question of power alone but of public reason and equity, not politics but ethics.

Madam President,

India believes that the reform of the United Nations that establishes a just, fair and equitable balance of power and responsibilities among the General Assembly, the Security Council and the ECOSOC must be pursued as an ongoing and transparent process. Many years ago, Ralph Bunche, a citizen of USA and the first UN official to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, spoke of radical change, stating that “the UN has no vested interest in the status quo.” We believe that vested interests today should not be allowed to ensure the continuation of status quo at the UN. To use some moving phrases spoken in New Delhi recently we want a United Nations that would not be dominated by “power politics, military might and division” but would be “a global force for peace, progress and prosperity”. While these were spoken in the context of India’s outlook they are equally applicable to UN reform and encapsulate our approach.